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ABSTRACT

Disputing the claim that improved student learning requires stronger academic standards and stiffer tests, the authors of this book contend that effective state reform depends on coherence in policy and practice, and opportunities for professional learning. It draws on a study of a program in California that worked to improve mathematics teaching and learning. The study showed that state policy had a constructive influence on math education in the elementary grades when there was a consistency among the tests and other policy instruments, the curricula, and other instruments of classroom practices, and when teachers had substantial opportunities to learn the practices proposed by the policy. When these conditions were met, students posted higher scores on state math tests. The book also shows that most teachers did not have access to consistent instruments of classroom practice, nor did they have opportunities to learn the new practices that state policymakers proposed. The book further discusses the ways policy and practice can be linked in successful educational reform and why such linkage is difficult to achieve. It also offers suggestions to practitioners and policymakers seeking to improve education and to analysts seeking to understand it. (WFA)

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